

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL ON RELIGIOUS EDUCATION (SACRE)

MINUTES of a meeting of the Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) held in the The Common Room, Cathedral Lodge Canterbury on Tuesday, 10 June 2025.

PRESENT: Mr S Dixon (Chair), Miss M Paddison-Chapman (Vice-Chair), Mr S Bowen, Ms N Brownfield, Ms K Burke, Mr P Chamberlain, Mrs T Dean, MBE, Mrs M Lawson, Mrs B Naden, Mr J Paul, Mrs S Polden, Mrs J Wigg and Ms H Williams

IN ATTENDANCE: Ms P Smith-Orr (Consultant Advisor) and Mr J Clapson (Democratic Services Officer)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

1. Membership

(Item 1)

New Members

The SACRE extended a warm welcome to Mrs Simmone Polden who joined the Council as the Baha'i representative, and Mr Spencer Dixon, Mr Paul Chamberlain and Mrs Trudy Dean who joined as Kent County Council representatives.

Election of Vice-Chair

Members RESOLVED that Mrs Paddison-Chapman be re-affirmed Vice-Chair of the SACRE for the period up to May 2029.

2. Apologies for Absence/Substitutes

(Item 2)

Apologies were received from the following:

Miss Pope, Mr Shepherd, Ms Ralph, Miss Bostock, Mrs Elapatha, Mrs Goldstein, Mrs Cheema, Mrs Porteous and Ms Hawkes.

3. Declarations of Interests

(Item 3)

There were no declarations of interest.

4. Minutes of the Meeting Held on 12.3.25

(Item 4)

Subject to the correction of Mrs M Lawson's name in the list of those present, the minutes were approved as a correct record.

5. RE Advisor Verbal Update and Wire Awards (Item 5)

Interfaith Week Update

1. Mrs Smith-Orr advised that a report on the findings of the Government's consultation regarding its support of Interfaith Week had been published. The report suggested that consideration should be given to moving the week from its traditional timing in November. Mrs Smith-Orr added that the Government had disbanded Interfaith UK, who previously organised the week, however individuals and organisations continued to hold the week last year and were planning on doing so again in November 2026. The event was being supported by the Faith and Belief Forum, who had stepped in to replace Interfaith UK. They worked hard to promote the event with lots of useful resources for schools and other event organisers.

Update on the curriculum review and RE's inclusion in a new National Curriculum

2. Mrs Smith-Orr confirmed that she had responded to the Government's consultation with the points that SACRE members had shared with her. The interim report had been published and only briefly referred to religious education.
3. During consideration of the item the following points were raised:
 - There seemed to be widespread support for the introduction of a national framework for RE from those attending the recent NASACRE Conference.
 - A national framework could help to make some schools take the provision of RE more seriously and could help to reduce disparities in the quality of RE provision between schools. However, it was important to ensure that the framework was flexible enough to meet the needs of different types of schools.
 - The final report was expected to be released in November 2025.
 - Some Members suggested that the introduction of a national framework maybe beneficial, but the syllabus should continue to be agreed at a more local level as those living in the area were best placed to decide what should be taught.
 - SACRE's were formed in 1988, this changed the teaching of RE to include all religions. More recently RE teaching has evolved to consider world views and many syllabuses look to identify the similarities and differences between faiths.
 - A good syllabus helps to develop understanding and tolerance of others with different faiths and beliefs. The Kent syllabus is one of the most broad ranging and inclusive syllabuses available to schools.
 - Mrs Smith-Orr offered to circulate the Kent syllabus to the new members of the SACRE.

The WIRE Awards

4. Mrs Smith-Orr provided a bit of background information about the WIRE Award, advising that schools could pay £500 to apply for an RE Quality Mark from the Religious Education Council of England and Wales. However, in light of school budget limitations, some SACRE's, including Kent, ran the WIRE Award as a free alternative. The WIRE award had four categories that were intended to raise the profile of RE in schools. Schools collect evidence over a year then submit what they have done for assessment.
5. It was RESOLVED that the submissions from both Ditton Infant School and Lady Boswell's Primary School had met the threshold to receive the WIRE award.
6. Mr Dixon and Mr Paul offered to present the Award to Ditton Infant School and Mrs Smith-Orr offered to present the award to Lady Boswell's Primary School.

6. Verbal Update on Local Network Groups

(Item 6)

1. Ms Brownfield advised that she had held two meetings since the SACRE last met. She felt there was a strong core of interest developing and said that the group recently met for the first time in person. They had heard from Picture News at a recent meeting and some of the schools had chosen to look more deeply into the services they offered.
2. Mrs Paddison-Chapman shared that the Thanet group had continued to grow and sometimes had up to 12 attendees. She felt that It was an effective way for teachers to develop relationships between schools.
3. Mrs Smith-Orr said that there had been a couple of online secondary school meetings since the last SACRE meeting. She intended to hold an in-person event at least once a year.

7. Development Plan 2024-25

(Item 7)

1. Mrs Smith-Orr introduced the development plan.
2. During consideration of the item the following points were raised:
 - The WIRE Award section was to be updated with one entry in Spring and two in Summer.
 - Consideration was to be given to using The Salvation Army in Maidstone for the next SACRE away day in summer 2026.
 - The SACRE away day could take place in the morning and be followed by some training and engagement with teachers in the afternoon.

8. 2025 NASACRE Conference Feedback

(Item 8)

1. Mrs Smith-Orr, Ms Burke, Mrs Cheema and Mr Clapson attended the conference. Those present who had attended the conference gave a brief overview of what had been discussed and highlighted that conference had been very interesting experience.
2. Mr Clapson advised that further information could be viewed using the following link: [2025: SACREs taking a stand: positive responses to controversial issues - NASACRE](#)
3. Members would be advised of the 2026 conference details when they became available.

9. School Website Review Update

(Item 9)

1. Mrs Smith-Orr advised that one remit of the SACRE was to monitor RE and collective worship in schools. The law directed that 5% of teaching time should be allocated to the subject. SACRE Members had been conducting a desk top review to assess if

school websites showed any information about RE, collective worship or the amount of time they dedicated to it.

2. During consideration of the update the following points were raised:
 - Thanks were offered to all those who had sent Mrs Smith-Orr their review results.
 - There were 536 schools in Kent and 181 had been assessed so far. A lot of these schools did not specify which syllabus they were using.
 - Some schools were using the Discovery RE syllabus, which was based upon the Kent agreed syllabus but had to be purchased. The Kent syllabus was free and had been sent to all the schools.
 - The Chair offered to write a letter to all schools to advise them that review was taking place and to advise of its criteria. This letter could also be circulated via the Kent Association of Leaders.

10. Budget Update

(Item 10)

1. The latest budget position had been included in the agenda.
2. New SACRE members were to advise Mr Clapson if they wished to have an annual subscription to RE Today.

11. The Kent Agreed Syllabus - Sept 2027

(Item 11)

1. Mrs Smith-Orr shared the following points:
 - The last syllabus ran from 2022-27. SACRE had a duty to review the syllabus every five years.
 - The last syllabus was purchased from RE Today and there would be a requirement to renew the license if a new syllabus was not adopted. It would cost around £22,512 to purchase a new syllabus.
 - If the Government introduced a national syllabus, it was probable that it would closely resemble the RE Today syllabus as around half the SACREs in the country used it.

12. Any other items which the Chairman decides are urgent

(Item 12)

There were no other items considered.